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**REMARKS**

Applicants respectfully present Claims 1-24 for examination in the RCE filed herewith. Claims 1, 9 and 17 have been amended herein to more clearly define the scope of the presently claimed invention. No new claims have been submitted. Applicants respectfully submit that the claims and remarks presented herein overcome the Examiner's rejections in the Final Office Action dated December 16, 2004 in the parent application.

35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 1-24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over the combination of Matsuda, U.S. Patent No. 6,346,956 ("Matsuda") in view of Suzuki et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,736,982 ("Suzuki"). Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's rejection.

Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner failed to fully address Applicants previously submitted arguments. More specifically, the Examiner states the following in the Office Action dated December 16, 2004:

"2) In response to applicant's argument that the references fail to show certain features of applicant's invention, it is noted that the features upon which applicant relies (i.e., prioritization and selecting the target) are not recited in the rejected claim(s)"

Office Action, December 16, 2004, page 6.

Applicants respectfully submit that this statement is erroneous. Even a cursory examination of independent Claims 1, 9 and 17 would show that each of these claims includes the elements of prioritization of objects and selecting target objects based on the prioritization. Applicants therefore respectfully reiterate the previously presented argument that the combination of Matsuda and Suzuki does not render Claims 1-24 unpatentable. Matsuda describes a three dimensional virtual reality space display processing apparatus, method and information providing medium. Suzuki describes a virtual space apparatus with avatars and speech. The Examiner concedes that Matsuda does not teach the method of determining distances between the objects and a point in virtual three-dimensional space or the prioritization of the objects based on distances and identities of the objects and then selecting the target object from among the objects based

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on priority. The Examiner suggests, however, that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to combine the teachings of Matsuda with Suzuki to do so. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Specifically, Suzuki, Col. 10, lines 15-40 appears to discuss how to calculate distances *between avatars*. It does not, however, teach the claimed element of "determining distances between *the objects and a point in virtual three-dimensional space*", as claimed. There is also no teaching or suggestion in this section of *prioritization based on distance and identities*, or *selecting target objects based on priority*. Similarly, Suzuki, Col. 15, lines 32-48 discusses how "concentric circles are drawn about the avatar A1 and the voices of avatars in circles of smaller radii are graded up to higher levels of quality". Again, this section of Suzuki does not teach or suggest determining distances between the objects and a point in virtual three-dimensional space, or selecting target objects based on priority, where the *priority* is based on distance *and identities*. Finally, Suzuki, Col. 29, lines 6-10 claims an apparatus including a "means which selects, for each avatar, those of the other avatars whose distances therefrom are within said threshold value and which are present in the field of vision of said each avatar." Once again, Applicant respectfully submits that this section of Suzuki makes no reference to determining distances between the objects and a point in virtual three-dimensional space, or *prioritization* of the objects based on distance *and identities*. Neither is there any teaching about selecting target objects based on the determined priority.

The Examiner goes on to suggest that Suzuki teaches determining the speech quality of the other avatars based on their distance (Suzuki, Col. 2, lines 24-30). The Examiner then interprets the speech quality described in Suzuki to be prioritization of selected target objects (Office Action, 12/16/04, Page 6). Again, Applicants strongly disagree. As claimed, the prioritization is based on *distances and identities of the objects*. There is no teaching or suggestion in Suzuki of prioritization *based on distances and identities of the objects*. Applicants therefore once again submit that Matsuda and/or Suzuki, alone or in combination, do not render Claims 1-24 unpatentable. Applicants therefore respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection to Claims 1-24 under 35 U.S.C. §103.

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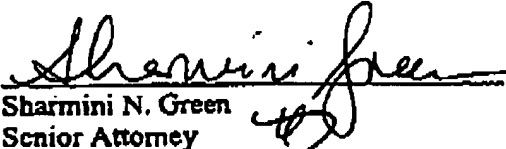
**CONCLUSION**

Based on the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that the applicable objections and rejections have been overcome and that pending Claims 1-24 are in condition for allowance. Applicants therefore respectfully request an early issuance of a Notice of Allowance in this case. If the Examiner has any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at (310) 406-2362.

If there are any additional charges, please charge Deposit Account No. 50-0221.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 14, 2005

  
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